

Exhibit 8

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Virginia

Without Social Security numbers, illegal immigrants face eviction

By Antonio Olivo February 10 at 5:03 PM

The owners of a Northern Virginia mobile-home park are trying to evict about 15 residents who don't have Social Security numbers and are in the country illegally, an effort that attorneys for the families say violates federal and state fair housing laws.

The battles unfolding at individual court hearings hinge on whether the mobile-home park's owners can demand Social Security numbers as proof of identity. The cases illustrate the fragile foothold that low-wage workers, particularly immigrants, have in affluent Northern Virginia.

Lawyers with the Legal Aid Justice Center are fighting the eviction proceedings in Fairfax County's General District Court, arguing that Waples Mobile Home Park is discriminating against the residents by refusing to accept as proof of identity tax identification numbers that the Internal Revenue Service provides to non-U.S. citizens working in the country.

Waples is owned by a limited partnership headed by Albert J. Dwoskin, who did not return calls for comment. Dwoskin's property management company — A.J. Dwoskin & Associates — said it insists on Social Security numbers from all new tenants as a way to conduct background checks on those residents.

"Everyone has to have an ID, a Social Security card and provide pay stubs so they can qualify to live here," said Josephine Giambanco, who manages the Waples site. "We ask that for everybody. Everyone who is over the age of 18 years old."

Ivy Finkenstadt, a Legal Aid Justice Center lawyer representing the families, argued that her clients are being targeted because of their immigration status. Under Virginia's landlord-tenant law, landlords have the option of accepting the IRS tax identification numbers as proof of identity for new renters, which Finkenstadt said Waples has previously done for some residents. The tax ID numbers also can be used for background checks, but not as effectively as Social Security numbers.

For the families, the eviction proceedings threaten a rare source of affordable living in a region where housing within the budgets of low-income immigrants often means cramped, overcrowded apartments or illegally converted basements.

Dagoberto and Rosie Reyes said they jumped at the chance to move out of an Annandale apartment they shared with several other tenants and into Waples three years ago, after purchasing a mobile home for \$25,000. The mobile-home park, behind a shopping plaza off Lee Highway, is close to both their jobs; Dagoberto Reyes works as a house painter, and Rosie Reyes cleans houses.

“We saved and saved,” Rosie Reyes said, about the Salvadoran couple’s effort to buy their first home. “I worked three jobs at one point. My husband worked two. When I cleaned houses, I took my son with me, so we didn’t have to pay for a babysitter.”

The couple has received an eviction notice and is trying to figure out where to move next.

Waples is one of a handful of mobile-home parks in the Washington area that date to the middle of last century and increasingly are occupied by immigrants with low income. There is a tot lot for kids, a small soccer field and a picnic area. Monthly utilities and usage fees are about \$900.

“We all get along pretty good,” said Brad Fraser, who has lived there for seven years and has seen many Latinos move in.

In recent years, some immigrant families have doubled up inside the mobile homes, which include living rooms, kitchenettes and up to three bedrooms. Others took over mobile homes that had been bought and registered by friends or relatives, assuming responsibility for the monthly fees.

Last fall, the site’s property managers began asking residents who were not registered with the management office to provide Social Security numbers — a problem for those who are not U.S. citizens. Soon after, Waples managers sent eviction notices.

“The fact that the company changed what it would accept has an impact on who can rent there, and that effect is discriminatory,” said Finkenstadt, the Legal Aid lawyer.

Giambanco, the property manager, declined to comment on previous policies, and a Waples attorney did not return calls for comment.

Elba Navarro, who has lived at Waples with her husband and three children for 10 years, said the policy change has spread anxiety through a once-calm community.

“They told us ‘If you don’t have a Social, you’ll have to leave,’” said Navarro, whose household includes a mixture of family members with legal immigration status and others without. “It caused a lot of fear. One had to hide the clothes of whoever wasn’t registered.”

Michelle Krocker, director of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, said low-wage workers like those at Waples have few other options in a county where the median monthly rent is about \$1,600, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“It’s close to work, and it’s all they can afford,” Krocker said. “As a local economy, we need those workers to be here.”

Maria Gonzalez, who is one of the people being targeted for eviction, said she worries about finding a new home close to her job as a housekeeper for a nearby hotel, currently a five-minute commute away.

“It’s very difficult,” she said.

Several Waples residents targeted for eviction said they have not yet paid off what they owe on their mobile homes. At the same time, many are resigned to leaving.

“We’d like at least enough time for the children to be out of school,” Guery Escobar said, sitting with a group of neighbors inside his narrow living room.

Antonio covers government, politics and other regional issues in Fairfax County. He worked in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago before joining the Post in September of 2013.